Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0360CT-1 for Hartford Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states the vision, i.e., "The overarching vision for this proposal is to take Hartford Public Schools' (HPS) successful six year reform effort to the next level: a student-centered, deeply personalized educational experience for all of Hartford's children." It is clear the project is supported by the broad, Hartford, CT community as evidenced by the 10 supporting letters that introduce this application. The vision includes aligning curriculum with Common Core standards and developing and implementing a standards-based report card system while helping teachers understand the focus and increasing their ability to fully implement a standards approach in their classrooms, and particularly to personalize learning for all students. The district will be data driven and accountability plans in every school will be based on academic information including but not limited to test scores and achievement data. The district , in turn will analyze and report to stakeholders individual school and district data about student academic success and needs. Providing families with choices of schools where their children can attend, combined with the Portfolio approach, increases the personalization of learning for each child which will contribute to turning around the lowest performing schools.

The vision is a result of the involvement of stakeholders and builds on the core areas of adopting standards, e.g. participating with the state in using Common Core, building data systems that measure student growth, making it possible for students and parents to access progress in meeting the standards. The vision and subsequent high quality plan includes the use of technology to track student progress in meeting standards, giving parents information about the academic status of their child, and providing instructors with data to assist in making decisions that will personalized learning for all students. The vision also includes the recruitment, training, and retention of educators (teachers and principals) and making sure they are placed where they are needed the most. The assessment, development, and personnel decisions regarding teaching effectiveness, professional development needs, retention, and reassignment are addressed. All schools in the district have or will be part of a reform effort. This application addresses the secondary schools in the district which is a scale-up from the previous reform of the district's elementary schools.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The 41 secondary, middle and high schools will participate in the grant activities. The schools are identified by number and name; all 10,041 students will participate; 839 educators will be involved; and the application identifies low-income and other high needs children as receiving special attention. Data and information relative to implementation is presented in tables. This information, provided throughout the application, provides goals, activities/actions, who/what is responsible for completing the actitivites, and outcomes that are measurable. The rationale for the selection of the schools is presented as well as the expectations for the initiative. The applicant clearly describes plans to create and sustain a student-centered effort through a quality plan of action.

The applicant provides all of the required data and information for the participating schools and describes the rationale used for their selection. The district focused the application on the 41 secondary schools in the district to build on the previous six-year reform effort at the elementary schools. The focus on the secondary schools is to provide a continuous reform effort for k-12.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The plan includes, as stated, the 41 secondary schools, and thus there is no scaling-up in the district as a k-12 reform effort is underway.

There is a pre-k-12 scope to this plan and as evidenced by previous statements this application and the ideas it contains creates a systemic, long-range, and consistent attention to the criteria set forth in the grant. There is less a focus on "reform" than enhancement and continuous change which still addresses the needs identified as priority in this grant. Building upon the existing plan does translate into meaningful reform and it and will be continually supported by district-wide resources to facilitate immediate and responsible sustained change. A high quality plan exist that addresses standards and includes the element of the project, e.g., personalize learning, sub-goal and the tasks needed to achieve the goal, the timeline for completion of the tasks, what outcomes or deliverables are expected and how they will be measured/assessed, and who or what has responsibility for the tasks.

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(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Project systems, such as the District Performance Index (DPI), a state system that measures the status of students in individual schools, the Overall School Index (OSI), a Hartford system to measure the performance level of each school, and the State Performance Index (SPI) are examples of data tracking systems geared to increase accountability. There are data/information systems that track and identify learning strengths and areas in which students are in need of immediate attention. Goals regarding improving student outcomes, decreasing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rate, increasing college enrollment, and increasing the acquisition of post-secondary degrees are articulated in clear tables. These goals are clear and attainable and they involve all stakeholders including but not limited to teachers, building and district level staff, parents, students, and community members and organizations. An overall goal of the proposed project is to reduce the achievement gap by half by 2018 for schools and sub-groups. Another encompassing goal is to increase cohort graduation rate by annual increments to achieve a 94% graduation rate by 2018.

There are nominal and same percentage increases in the Decreasing Achievement Gaps table and the rationale for addressing achievement gaps is not clear. One would expect a differentiation between sub-groups. Also, there is no indication the plan focuses on meeting or exceeding state target academic goals.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has achieved five consecutive years of growth in achievement and has outpaced the state rate of growth as indicated in the bulleted items. The highlights of this growth and the additional identification of achievement gaps between the applicant and "the rest of the state" from 2006-2011 reflect overall district academic growth.

- 22.3% growth in 3rd grade reading as measured by the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)

- 20.9% growth 4th grade mathematics as measured by the CMT Reading scores increased by 7.7% and writing by 13.9% on the 10th grade   Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)

- 25.4% increase in the graduation rate

- 4.3% increase in post-secondary enrollment

These highlights are at least partial evidence of the potential success of this application. There is a clear record of the improvement of access to and results of quality education for all students. This data is shared with parents and students through written communication, meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and the CT website.

However, while data indicates sustained achievement gains in reading, mathematics, and writing it is not clear if the sub-groups are included. It is not clear how achievement gaps have been closed. It is also not clear how specifically achievement in the lowest performing schools was addressed.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Support and the comprehensive nature of the planning and student academic data (mindful of FERPA) is transparent and available by district and by school.

School and district communication web pages and public publications such as but not limited to newspapers provide the kind of information required, i.e., salaries, budget figures, etc. where the budget includes personnel salaries at the district and school levels are made available to the public. Specific publicly available figures include:

- Personnel salaries at the school level for all instructional and support staff
- Personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only
- Personnel salaries at each school for teachers only
- Non-personnel expenditures at the school level

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

After having been "under state control" the district demonstrated its capacity to address the needs of students, parents, citizens, and the culture. The broad-based support characterized in the letters of support is evidence of the autonomous and cooperative nature of the relationship of the district with various pertinent public and private groups and agencies. As one of CT's 30 Alliance School Districts and now being released from state control, having regained local control, the district has a special relationhipship with the state that encourages it, free from state oversight, to increase student achievement. For example, the CT SDE has developed specific performance targets for each district aimed at closing the achievement gap by half by 2020. The district and the plan are aligned with state initiatives.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

For this proposal: A number of focus groups have been conducted to inform stakeholders of the major elements of the proposal and solicit their responses. Focus groups have been held with groups of teachers, parents, students, and community and corporate partners that have explained the major components of the grant and sought their reactions and suggestions. In most cases, their feedback reaffirmed the concepts already included in the grant; in some cases, their ideas were incorporated as new additions. Letters of support range from the Mayor of Hartford to various business and civic organizations.

The focus group element of the planning of the proposal (application) characterizes the nature of stakeholder involvement in the process. Students were also involved. The application also describes "The development of the Strategic Operating Plan (SOP), <u>which is the foundation of this proposal</u>….". This focus group included the Hartford Board of Education, the teachers and school leaders of the district, central office staff, and representatives from higher education, the community, and corporations. The applicant indicates that "a number of teachers have participated in the focus groups that discussed various aspects of this proposal" yet there are no letters or other indications of support from the local or state teacher associations.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

There is a description of the analysis of needs and gaps and that information has been presented in tables and other narrative portions of this application. From the family, school, and district levels achievement gaps have been identified through such systems as NWEA-MAP, OSI. For example, there is a description of how the schools analyze data and how they engage parents and educators in developing school accountability plans for each school and particularly developing quality processes for low performing schools. There is a high quality plan that addresses goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. For example:

Goal: To increase student achievement and college readiness and reduce the achievement gap through a personalized approach to learning

Sub-goal: Transition to the Common Core Curricula and assessment district-wide, including standards-based report cards and universal screening through NWEA-MAP

Activities: Specific activities include curriculum review, report card development and piloting, teacher and administrator professional development, etc.

Timelines: Fall of 2010-2011 a schedule was developed, 2011-2012 two schools piloting standards-based report card, etc.

Deliverables: Core curricular will be aligned with the Common Core, all schools using the standards-based report card, etc.

Responsible parties: Office of Academics, Office of Assessment, Office of K-12 Education, and Office of Parent Engagement

The Overall School Index (OSI) and the State Performance Index (SPI) provide fodder that contributes sound data from which to sustain the plan and to reach the vision. This information contributes to a clear plan that addresses the vision and elements of the proposed project.

There is not a description of existing needs by school and what gaps exist related to academic achievement, sub-group problems, etc. Such information would provide base data from which specific school-site efforts within the grant could be directed.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

It is noted that, while the focus for this reform effort is on the secondary schools, the entire school district is involved. The reform effort at the K-6 level and and now the secondary schools creates a dynamic, cohesive effort to address the needs of all students in the district. This relationship is addressed by the statement, "Recognizing that increasingly personalized approaches to learning will impact the structure of high school credits…" The aim is building "the robust capacity that will make" personalized education possible. The plan is not committed to "just four walls" which implies a greater responsibility and involvement in the steady improvement of learning for all children. There are clearly identified and explained outcomes regarding how the immediate (each building) and broader (district and community) education system has and will continue to be involved.

The Advisory Program and the Student Success Plans, the Career Counseling Conceptual Framework, student internships, etc. are indicators of the wide and deep involvement of stakeholders, including students. These programs and others are designed to increase short- and long-range planning for students to understand the importance of learning and to identify life as well as career goals.

Through the availability of tablets, laptop computers for secondary students and open schools for parents and the community, PTOs, etc. there's communication that increases the level of parent involvement of school and community. Parents/families will be involved in the creation and monitoring of the Student Success Plans.

Personalized learning, e.g., standards-based curriculum and assessments that individualize as well as personalize student learning, is addressed throughout the application. The existence of schools of choice, including magnate schools and learning academies provide students and parents the opportunity to find the best "fit" for the individual student that will address their singular needs, personalities, knowledge and skills sets, and life preferences. Student Success Plans easily accessible to students and their families will be continuously updated, thus keeping parents involved through access to information and contributing to the Student Success Plans.

The table of goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties is clear and the "deliverables" are concrete, specific, and measurable as indicated by their description.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The recognition of the key role played by teachers is to enhance their support to increase their capacity through embedded professional development that is aligned with teacher needs and directly involves them in the project in the classroom, school, district, and community levels. Staff development will be aligned with teacher needs in order to fully support the plan. Each school is to be staffed with literacy coaches and specialists with the responsibility to working teachers. This real-time coaching will help teachers in classrooms address achievement gaps particularly of sub-groups and to personalize learning for each student. These coaches, based in the central office, will be available to teachers throughout the district. They will provide real-time support and information to instructors at school sites to implement personalized learning, STEM and literacy initiatives, and to help adapt instruction to address the learning styles and preferences for each child in a standards-based and Common Core environment.

Using data and other information as previously alluded to, it is part of the responsibilities of the district educators (teachers and administrators) and the central office/district staff to be involved in helping school educators analyze and use data to

address the goals of the project, e.g.., preparing students for post-12 life. Regular and timely feedback of building and district educators is included in the communication/involvement system. The district is working with C. Danielson through a three-year partnership to develop and refine "teacher, administrator, and other staff performance management".

A Project 1 table mirrors that which was previously described by matching staff performance assessment and improvement through a variety of professional development initiative with the goal action plan for the overall project. For example, one activity includes "Train the Trainers model to support elements of personalized instruction. Promote the development of teacher leaders in each school to sustain PLCs." Also the plan identifies training needs such as but not limited to "Increasing teacher capacity to deliver high-quality, personalized, differentiated instruction that responds to students' background, age, and learning needs and increases students' college readiness."

The applicant has identified the need to increase instructor effectiveness and it is not clear what the applicant means by "dramatic" improvement.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning that are part of the high quality plan that includes goals, activities, outcomes/deliverables, and responsible individuals and/or groups are indentified. These goals include:

(a)   Organizing the LEA central office, or the consortium governance structure (as defined in this notice), to provide support and services to all participating schools through the addition of a project manager, coaches who will work with school site educators, tutors who will work with ELL children, etc. are some examples of how the LEA, as a whole, will support the initiative. The LEA central office will also assist schools in reaching out to and involving local stakeholders.

(b)   Providing school leadership teams in participating schools (as defined in this notice) with sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets. Schools will have autonomy to manage calendars, scheduling, staffing, budgeting that will increase the particular kind of attention, e.g. increasing student achievement and strategies for closing achievement gaps.

(c)   Giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic. The intention is to move away from attendance and toward mastery. Using standards-based report cards is an example of this effort.

(d)   Giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. The demonstration of mastery can occur as many times as needed. Another program is a Service Learning Project that connects students with the community. Each student will have a learning plan.

(e)   Providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. From revising curriculum to align it with Common Core to providing ELL tutors to developing RTI/SRBI strategy to identify individual students learning needs at an early age and then - implement research-based instructional methods to address those needs" is a strength.

The district is providing the conceptual and organizational base from which to implement and sustain the proposed project.

	Available	Score
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The extensive use of technology including the internet creates the "anywhere, anytime" principle that seems to guide and serve as a base value for the project. This characteristic of the support and inclusion of key stakeholders coupled with the articulate identification of "Existing Conditions" and "Initiatives under Development" with extensive involvement of members of the community assures accountability and the dynamic sustaining of the project. The School Leadership Network, The 1:1 Device

Initiative, and the Superintendent's Website and Intranet Committee contribute to ensuring continued information sharing. Also, schools will use PowerSchool to help parents access and track their child's academic progress, grades, behavior, and evaluations. Using School Leadership Network that supports professional learning communities and which now includes community-based forums are examples of the engagement of stakeholders.

Providing each 9-12 student with a tablet or laptop will increase accessibility to information about the school, the district, and the project. A Parent Welcome Center and community partnerships create a network that provides information and seeks meaningful involvement in the goals, i.e. achievement for all students. This Center will be equipped with computers and an assistant to help parents. Also, the Technology Town Hall for educators, parents, and community to celebrate student use of technology and to learn about new technology and software. The Parent Welcome Center and Technology Hall for educators, etc. exists. Though PowerSchool/Parent Portal is used in two schools it is not clear how this will program be available in all project schools. Also, there is no high quality plan to address technology as there has been in other areas.

There is not a clear presentation or description of the interoperability of the state or local data systems regarding the inclusion of human resource or budget data. This does not fully respond to the selection criteria. The applicant was under state control with the mandate to improve learning for all students. At the time of this application the LEA has regained local control. The district participates in the state student achievement tracking system but a richer description of state-district collaboration that addressed, for example, the waiving of rules, if necessary, to facilitate the project is lacking.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The continuous communication loop, i.e., information, feedback, and action is one of the major tasks of the Strategic Innovation Manager during years two and four. This person will develop the systems to create and sustain a high level of communication among and with stakeholders that would include how the district is managing the programs funded by and supported by the grant. Through early implementation of reform or re-design efforts in some schools it is evident the district is committed to continuous improvement in the short- and long-term. Sustaining those efforts will demonstrate a commitment to improving school system.

The strategy for working with constituents reflects an organization that is truly dedicated to reform. The aforementioned Strategic Innovation Manager (SIM) will report and recommend steps for adjustments, modifications, and improvement in the project. School principals will also report progress thus increasing site-based accountability assuring "internal" and "external" stakeholder knowledge and support of the plan. The SIM will also have responsibility for developing systems, e.g., technological and procedural, for tracking fiscal elements of the project. Through the "Ten Channels," that are designed to keep communication flowing about the project there will also be ways to monitor the fiscal and programmatic investments in the project. The "Ten Channels," include but are not limited to school site governance councils, the superintendent's cabinet, etc.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies and explains ten "channels" designed to keep communication open and fluid. The "Ten Channels" include:

1. A district web site
2. District intranet
3. Principal newsletters
4. Principal governance councils
5. Superintendent's Board
6. School Leadership Teams
7. Superintendent's Cabinet
8. Principal Leadership
9. School Quality meetingsa
10. Community Forumtsa

With the addition of electronic means for reaching stakeholders, i.e., tablets, web sites, laptops, etc. there several ways to

create and sustain communication about the project.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has 12 performance measures that correspond with those previously presented. Each performance measure is supported with a sound, logical, and often research-based rationale. The application identifies and explains specific measures and indicators and the tables identify clear, attainable, and measurable outcomes as prescribed. For example, the applicant indicates the reduction of achievement gaps by half by 2018 for schools and sub-groups. That target requires great gains for students and these gains are measurable and concrete. The rationale for this goal, in particular, addresses one of the requirements for this grant. Another example is improving the graduation rate to 94% by 2018 which is a goal that is attainable, measurable, and concrete.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Overall the intent is to take the pulse of elements of the project, for example, to discover teacher understanding of how to administer assessments, do instructors understand the RTI/SRBI system, are parent activities identified, being implemented and are they successful, etc. The applicant identifies examples in several areas it will want to probe more deeply and track during the project. These include but are not limited to the list below.

NEWA-MAP assessments

RTI/SRBI

Increased teacher capacity for personalized and differentiated instruction

One-on-one technology

Advisory program

Student Success Plans

Internship Program

The Bridge to College program

College awareness activities for all students and families

System alignment: the Strategic Innovation Manager could initiate this during the initial planning year.

For example the NWEA-MAP assessments will focus on whether teachers understand how to administer assessments and work with the data to address achievement and achievement gaps. The RTI/SRBI intervention is designed to address student/learner variables that influence academic achievement, such as self-esteem, etc. and progress in achieving this outcome will be assessed. These and other project efficacy assessments will be done by the "systems/organizational development/evaluation consultant who will assess the systemic status of the district and prepare a systems development plan and will outline directions for continuous improvement and parameters and processes for project evaluation, and the change manager will be responsible for carrying out those activities." These tasks contribute to the high quality plan as clear goals, tasks, timelines, outcomes, and responsible parties will be identified.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative supporting the budget is introductory and is more than adequately supported by the tables including *Budget Requirements and Evidence for Selection Criteria*. The documentation of the budget includes an Overall Budget Summary, Project Level Detail, Optional Budget Supplement, Overall Budget Summary, and Optional Budget Supplement: Project Detail. Each budget area is fully described and explained. Realistic indirect costs are also identified and explained.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This proposal includes the elements of a high quality plan for sustainability, including goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. For example the goal of supporting the effective use of instructional technology includes activities such as STEM training for teachers, the hiring of literacy coaches, etc. A timeline is in place, as are deliverables and the responsible party, which in this example is the Office of Academics.

Targeted funds for the continual support of the project are not evident. While it is clear the intention is to have the project go forward and the task for forward funding will fall to the Strategic Innovations Manager, there is no evidence of funding for the sustainability of the grant.

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Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Throughout the application and comments related to the application the richness of the partnerships has been emphasized and noted. Each critera addressed in this application has clearly related the intention and ability of the district to communicate, engage, and involve the stakeholders.

There is a compelling vision that drives the project. The focus on children and addressing their singular needs is the focus of the grant. While the academic and socio-psychological needs of students need to be more definitively identified and addressed they are a subtle element of the proposal. Throughout the grant there is a high quality plan that includes actions/tasks, what needs/actions are to be completed, who or what is responsible for their completion, and concrete/measurable outcomes or results. Stakeholders are involved at all levels of the proposed project and their continued meaningful involvement is highly encouraged.

The LEA and its schools, educators, parents, students, and the community are partners in this plan as evidenced by groups such as Partnership for Student Success, Internship and Employer Engagement Work Group, family dinners/PTO, meetings , etc. The Service Learning initiative will also connect the school system with the community. The Hartford Partnership for Student Success is an organization beyond school walls that will continue to be a partner.

The applicant identified the following 10 population-levels and results:

Student Outcomes

1. Increased student attendance in school
2. Improved student behavior
3. Increased student leadership
4. Improved academic performance

School Outcomes

1. Greater academic alignment and integration of school day and after school activities
2. Postive school climate

Family Outcomes

1. Improved communication between schools and families
2. Greater attendance and engagement at school meetings and events

Community Outcomes

1. Increased community access to school buildings
2. Incfreased community utilization of school buildings and engagement with the school

The applicant indicates that the Competitive Pirority activities will assess student needs and assets; identify and inventory school and community needs and assets; and create the means to select, implement, and evaluate support for students.

A solid example of how the partnership would integrate education and other services is The Hartford Partnership for Student Success: At a community school, a lead agency partners with the school plan, implement and sustain on-site services that provide a holistic approach to well-being and develop for children.... This component is paired with the Internship Employer Engagement Work Group that indicates "The Student Success Plans" will be utilized to develop both an academic and motivational element to personalizing learning for all students.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Throughout the application there has been an emphasis on what is good for students in the district. The focus of increasing a personalized learning experience also includes providing support for and from educators, parents, stakeholders, and others associated with the district, e.g., the city of Hartford. The overall plan is comprehensive in scope and depth in its short- and long-term financial commitment exemplified in the budgets, in taregting core subjects, i.e., reading and math, and in investing in the 41 seconday schools in the district. The secondary school focus of the project is a follow through on the previous reform effort at the elementary school level. The plan is also comprehensive in that it proposes strategies that focus on standards, assessment, the development and implementation of data systems, providing support, financial, professional development, and other such as tutors, to teachers and school site leaders. Through personalizing learning for all students in which students are the center of schools is manifest in focusing funding and resources, building on schools of choice, i.e. magnate schools, etc., focusing on the lowest peforming schools and creating a site-based management environment, aligning instruction, curriculum, assessment, and current programs to increase overall student achievment, close achievement gaps in student sub-groups, inceasing graduation rates, and increasing student readiness for post-12 life.

The lack of identified specific post-grant financial resources can be considered a weakness but the applicant states the project, funded by the grant, will continue and be sustained. There is also a lack of clarity regarding teacher support across the district and particularly in the secondary schools for this project. The involvement of stakeholders including but not limited to educators at the school and district levels, parents, the community, and private and government organizations is a strength. The involvement of these groups in the development of the grant and their continued involvement through focus groups, school-site activitie, e.g., parent events/PTO, are indications of the intent to sustain community involvement in the project.

Overall the project does meet the intentions of the first Absolute Priority.

Total	210	188

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0360CT-2 for Hartford Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents documented evidence of its previous work in the four core educational assurance areas. As evident by the support letters from the LEA's state board of education and mayor, the applicant has significantly addressed the unique needs of the district particularly in closing the achievement gap amongst its student subgroups and accelerating student achievement. The applicant presents a comprehensive approach to accelerating student achievement through the adoption of college and career standards, building robust data systems to inform educators, providing targeted professional development to educators, and implementing an aggressive plan to turn around lowest-performing schools. The applicant's vision of creating success plans for each participating student and providing interventionist specialists at the participating schools to address the targeted needs of students will likely accelerate student achievement during the grant term.

The applicant asserts that the LEA now leads the state in its "rate of improvement". The applicant provides the opportunity to deepening student learning through focused schools that include magnet programs and academies where students can participate in individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. This previous success record provides justification of the intent of the applicant to follow through on its district's goals in the four core educational assurance areas.

The applicant proposes to build on its work in the four core educational assurance areas by aligning its curriculum with the Common Core State Standards (college and career readiness based standards), utilizing School Accountability Plans based on school data to inform teaching and learning, utilizing the Charlotte Danielson Effective Teaching Framework to develop teachers, and employing the "Portfolio approach with a Managed Performance Empowerment Theory of Action" system to turn around lowest-performing schools. The applicant's vision for increasing equity through personalized learning environments is promising in that the proposed strategies to address the four core educational assurance areas are proven research based.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of a robust accountability data system (a core educational assurance area) that measures student achievement and college and career readiness. The new data system calculates a District Performance Index (DPI) and an Overall School Index (OSI) which will prove beneficial for informing teachers and principals of improvement areas of instruction.

 Although a letter of support is provided from *Teach For America*, it is unclear of how the applicant will utilize such organizations to attract and recruit highly effective teachers.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant "has chosen to address the needs of all its grade 6-12 students as participants in this proposal". The rationale presented for the selection of the participating schools is reasonable in that the district has previously provided significant resources for improving performance in the elementary grades. It is apparent that the district is focused on district-wide reform. Furthermore, by the end of the proposed grant term, all schools and all students in the district would have experienced a high-quality LEA-level and school level reform that is likely to improve results through the pipeline of education from grades K - 12.

The applicant provides a list of schools that will participate in grant activities.

The applicant presents sufficient evidence as to the percent of participating students identified as low income and high need in that 86.6% are from low-income families and 29.12% are high need students. The rationale for selecting the participating schools and students aligns with the applicant's previous reform initiative which incorporated the allocation of a significant amount of the LEA's budget to the schools, particularly to schools of need. Therefore, the selection of participating schools and students is appropriate.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Since the proposed reform model is a scale up of the previous reform implemented in elementary school, the applicant presents sufficient evidence of meaningful reform to support district-wide change. The applicant asserts that it will "build on [its] elementary work by offering rich learning environments for students in middle and high school".

Throughout the application, the applicant details a high quality plan for the proposed district wide scale up reform model (from

the previous elementary school reform to the proposed middle and high school reform) that includes specific and measurable goals (such as curriculum alignment with common core, utilization of a Response to Intervention (RTI) system and use of technology for personalized learning) and identified personnel or positions (such as content interventionists specialist and the instructional coaches) to address the reform activities.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's proposed reform model whose two focus areas are "Middle Years Redesign" and "College Readiness" is supported by a variety of actionable projects that are likely to result in improved student learning via a personalized learning environment.

The applicant's proposed Project 1 - *Provide an Interlinked System of Standards-based Curriculum*- is a part of a state initiative of aligning curriculum with the college and career readiness Common Core Standards. Hence, this project is likely to provide a more rigorous curriculum that will prepare students in middle and high school for college and career. Through the implementation of the proposed *Response to Intervention (RTI)* system, the participating teachers will receive job-embedded professional development that is targeted to their specific need of instructional intervention strategies. The RTI system is likely to increase student performance in targeted content areas and hence, supports the goal of providing personalized learning environments.

The applicant's proposed Project 2 - *Increase Access to Technology to Support Personalized Learning* - is to be implemented in high school. The primary action step in this project is to provide each high school student with a Personal Electronic Device (PED) for instructional use. Although the applicant asserts that PEDs will allow teachers to "pull small groups and build stronger relationships with students" that support personalized learning for this set of students, it is unclear if the risks of implementing learning strategies that include PEDs in high school out weigh the benefits. The applicant did not provide a discussion on how the applicant plans to mitigate the risks of including PEDs in high school. The application is lacking specifics as to how PEDs directly relate to the proposed improvement on the summative assessments throughout the grant period.

The applicant's proposed Project 3 - *Implementation of a Student Development Program*- is likely to improve graduation rates and college enrollment through the actionable goals attributed to this project. Most notable is the development of the "Student Success Plans" and the "Bridge to College" program.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of an accountability system based on a robust system of data collection. However, the proposed increase in performance on summative assessments (+3) and in graduation rates (+2) for each school year throughout the grant period is unsubstantiated by a research based rationale. Based on the data presented in the application, the applicant seems to indicate that their is no plan to close the achievement gap between subgroups of students since the proposed yearly improvement increases are constant for each subgroup.

The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence of how their proposed annual goals are equal to or exceed State ESEA targets.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years. In 2007, the LEA adopted the portfolio strategy by which low performing schools have either been turned around or replaced the identified schools with redesigned schools that provide college and career and pathways. The applicant asserts that the LEA now "leads the state in school reform efforts".

The applicant presents data (via charts and graphs) that sufficiently justify sustained achievement gains in Reading, Mathematics, Writing, and Science for the targeted grades over the past five years. However, the data only illustrates the aggregated results. It is unclear if there was equity in achievement gains amongst the student subgroups. The applicant did not provide data on closing achievement gaps per student subgroups such as ELL, African American, Hispanics, and Students with Special Needs.

The applicant presents evidence of raising high school graduation rates over the past five years from 33.4% to 63.2% with each year resulting in an approximate seven point increase over the previous year. The applicant also provides evidence of an increase in college enrollment over the past seven years.

The applicant presents sufficient evidence of its current transparency (via written communications, meetings and parent-teacher conferences) of student performance data to students and parents. School and district level student performance results are available for public sharing via the State Department of Education website. The proposed reform model includes a plan for augmenting this transparency via the "Student Success Plans". By the previously stated evidence, it is clearly apparent that the applicant has a robust system for making student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a description of a well established system of transparency of personnel salaries at the district level and by school, and non-personal expenditures. The LEAs budget is a part of the city budget, therefore its transparency is on par with the transparency of the city budget which is assumed to be available for public viewing. However, the extent to which this information is made available to the vast array of stakeholders is minimally adequate in that its requires stakeholders to have computer and internet access.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents evidence as to its level of autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements. Specifically due to the unique population of students the LEA serves, it enjoys a close relationship with the state department of education and the city's governing body as it is allocated special funding for targeted reforms. Notable is the fact that the district consist of a local Board of Education which under the State's structure of government has full decision-making autonomy. The applicant presents appropriate letters of support for the RTTT-D application from the State Department of Education and mayor. The letter from the State Department of Education confirms an alignment of the proposed reform model with the state's reform initiatives. This further justifies the proposed reform model's adherence to state legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements.

The applicant also presents evidence of compliance with the State's requirement for teacher certification and translates these requirements to its partner organizations such as Teach for America. The letter of support from Teach for America" further justifies the applicants strong relationship with the organization.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides adequate evidence of stakeholder engagement from parents, teachers, and relevant community groups. Notable is the focus group with students who provided candid comments. Also notable are the letters of support from the State Board of Education, mayor, and council president of the city of Hartford. However, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the focus group participants supported the proposed reform model. The applicant did not provide evidence of the number and demographics of the parents, teachers, and students who participated in the focus groups and community forums.

It is apparent that the applicant has appropriate support from the superintendent of school since a series of community forums designed to present and discuss the proposed plan was led by the superintendent.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which the stakeholder outreach was extensive enough to receive feedback from a representative group of stakeholders. It is unclear if collective bargaining representatives were engaged in any of the focus groups or community forums. The applicant does not present a letter of support from the collective bargaining representatives.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's proposed reform model for personalized learning environments is predicated on the desire to improve the results of middle school summative assessments, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment. The applicant asserts some progress has been made in development of personalized learning environments via previous district reforms.

However, there is an identified gap in reading assessments and college enrollment.

The applicant presents a high quality plan (including the rationale, timeliness, and persons responsible) for continuous tracking of the identified gaps, particularly during the grant period. Notable is the intensive review of data analyzed at the district level in which the Overall School Index (OSI) and the State Performance Index (SPI) is determined. This analysis is completed annually by the Office of Assessment. Also notable is the implementation of NWEA-MAP screening that will occur three times a year which informs the development of the School Accountability Plans.

The applicant presents a well established quality management system that is likely to provide useful data on critical implementation gaps during the grant period. The applicant identifies adequate staff positions who will be responsible for implementing the continuous tracking of the identified gaps during the grant period.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The "Advisory Program" and the "Student Success Plans", as described in the application, of the proposed reform model will likely ensure that all students will understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals. Most notable is the "Student Success Plan" in that it incorporates the academic, career, and personal/social domains. With this working plan, students, parents, and educators will work together to identify goals for success and develop strategies to reach these goals. The Student Success Plans provide a reasonable method for personalizing a sequence of instructional content for students.

Throughout the application, the applicant provides exhaustive evidence of the previous work that has been done on aligning the district's curriculum to the college and career Common Core standards and its intent to continue this alignment throughout the proposed grant period. Training on these new college and career Common Core standards and strategies to support these standards will be provided for all educators. It is therefore apparent that participating students will have the opportunity to pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards.

The applicant asserts that it now offers a number of themed academies, district magnets and charter school partnerships that are open to all students on the basis of their interest. By providing choice of enrollment to students and parents, students are more likely to choose schools where they will be able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of their academic interest. The academy programs, particularly those linked with the National Academy Foundation (NAF), will provide a personalized sequence of instruction aimed at attaining the selected academy's academic learning goals.

The applicant presents evidence of its intent to strengthen the internship and capstone learning experiences for high school students. Through partnerships with local community businesses, high school students will have the opportunity to deepen their learning experiences in areas of academic interest.

The applicant presents sufficient evidence as to its intent to use personalize learning devices (PEDs) effectively in the classroom to increase student engagement and support personalized learning environments. Teachers will be trained on high quality instructional approaches such as project based learning and inquiry based learning that utilize PEDs. However, the applicant did not provide details regarding policy development in management of the PEDs particularly in the high school environment. Effective PED management policies are needed to ensure the success of implementing PEDs in the high school classroom.

The applicant's proposed "Student Success Plans" will provide adequate frequent updates of individual student data that can be used to determine progress toward mastery. Through discussion of the "Student Success Plans" with counselors, students will received recommendations for personalized learning around knowledge and skills required to meet college and career ready standards.

The applicant provides insufficient details of how the proposed Advisory Program will provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. Although counselors will work with students on the development of the Student Success Plans, it is unclear if the counselors will also provide the necessary training of students on the tools and resources.

As evident by the provided detailed table that sufficiently describes the proposed goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties for the proposed reform model, the applicant presents a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	17

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents sufficient evidence of a plan to provide just-in-time embedded and differentiated professional development to participating teachers. The professional development will be aligned with the teachers' needs as identified by the evaluation system which is based on the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. This will likely develop the teachers' capacity to implement personalized learning environments for students.

Most notable is the applicant's plan to staff in each participating school STEM and Literacy coaches and specialists whose responsibilities will include working side by side with participating educators within established professional learning communities. The STEM and Literacy coaches and specialists will provide effective strategies for implementing project-based STEM units in grades 6-8, interdisciplinary projects, the effective use of technology to support personalize learning environments, and formative assessments in order to provide ongoing feedback on student learning. The utilization of coaches and specialists in a train-the-educator model will prove beneficial for increasing the capacity of participating educators to adapt content and instruction, providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches.

It is unclear if the staffing of just one STEM coach/specialist for each school is reasonable since this person would need to support educators in multiple content areas: science, technology education (computer science), and mathematics. This is of particular concern since some of the participating schools are academy or magnet schools and hence may have increased need for professional development in academy STEM related courses.

The applicant proposes to augment the Central Office management team by staffing two additional positions to support the school level coaches and specialists. Staffing of these positions are justified for the duration of the grant period because it will ensure that best practices developed at the school level are effectively shared across the schools in the district. Effective sharing of best practices across the district further solidifies the applicant's sustainability plan.

The applicant proposes to implement standards based report cards which will clearly link student achievement to the college and career Common Core standards being adopted by the district. Standards based report cards will likely provide actionable real time information to teachers, students, and parents. Standards-based report cards will provide a frequent measure of student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards, or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. It will also inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators.

The applicant proposes to staff each participating school with two part time intervention specialists who will work with the teachers and students (particularly the Tier II students) to improve individual student achievement based on actionable information obtained from the standards based report cards and the OSI ranking. This personnel will likely assist in increasing student achievement and hence the success of the proposed reform model.

The applicant proposes to improve principals' practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided through a school leadership rubric currently being implemented. The applicant further asserts that a new administrator evaluation system will be implemented in 2013-2014. However, it is not clear if the current evaluation rubric or the new evaluation system include measures aligned with the implementation goals of the proposed reform model. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the applicant has a plan to improve principal's practice and effectiveness as it relates to the proposed reform model.

The applicant provides evidence of a high quality plan that includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a high quality plan that includes rationale of comprehensive policies and infrastructure, timeliness of support, and persons responsible for goal implementation.

The applicant presents sufficient evidence of the district personnel structure which identifies a team of Portfolio Supervisors as managerial support to principals. The participating schools is likely to receive district organizational support from the central office.

The applicant presents evidence of current district policies that provide for sufficient flexibility and autonomy to school leadership teams to manage school based systems (such as scheduling, staffing, budgeting) that will have an effect on the success of the implementation of the proposed reform model. Autonomy is granted based on the school's demonstrated ability to deliver student achievement. The levels of autonomy range from full school based autonomy to "defined autonomy". Low performing schools who are identified as "defined autonomy" are provided with intervention support and at times are redesigned to a more effective school model. By targeting support where it is needed, the district is able to allocate resources appropriately to bring about change where it is most needed. This approach to intervention will likely prove beneficial during the implementation of the proposed reform model.

Of concern is that under the applicant's leveled autonomy policy "principals may <u>choose</u> to adopt standards-based report cards in specific grades or subjects or school wide". The applicant's proposed reform model is partially contingent on the ability of teachers, students, parents and content coaches/specialists having access to frequent standards-based feedback (such as standard based report cards) to inform the student's personalized learning plans. It is unclear how the applicant proposes to substitute for standards-based feedback (such as standard based report cards) when a principal may choose not to implement this policy. This could have a negative effect on the implementation of the proposed reform model.

The applicant presents adequate evidence of established district policies that guide mastery-based assessments rather than attendance or seat time for student achievement. Students are given multiple paths for meeting curriculum requirements such as extended year, extended day, or additional time at a given grade level. It is apparent from the applicant's assertion that the district does not accept attendance or seat time as a determining factor of academic mastery.

The applicant provides adequate evidence to its existing policies to address the needs of English Language Learners. However, the applicant provides limited evidence to its ability to address the personalized learning needs of other subgroups of students, particularly students with special needs and learning disabilities. Due to this lack of evidence of previous initiatives to provide learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, it is likely the applicant's proposed reform model will struggle with addressing the needs of <u>all</u> students especially students will special needs and learning disabilities.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides adequate evidence of a rationale, the timeliness, and the parties responsible for providing students and educators with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed to support the implementation of the proposed reform model. Notable is the "School Leadership Network", a professional networking tool for principals and central office staff, that allows for the sharing of information and tools in real time.

The applicant presents a variety of avenues for sharing student data, instructional resources, and unit/lessons to relevant stakeholders. Notable is the Parent Portal where parents will have access to student performance data in an open data format. However the applicant asserts that many of its students do not "have access to a computer at home". Although the applicant plans to supply each student in grades 9-12 with a tablet or laptop to use both inside and outside of school, it is unclear how the applicant proposes to meet the similar need for middle school students.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of its ability to provide technical support for students, parents, and educators through the established district's IT department, Parent Welcome Center, and community partnerships. This support aligns nicely with the potential need for technical assistance that will be presented throughout the implementation of the proposed reform model.

The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence of allowing parents and students to export information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems for additional learning supports.

Although the applicant states that a new Executive Director of Data Management has been hired to ensure access to data, it is not evident if the data systems currently in placed or proposed by the reform model will be interoperable.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a reasonable plan to implement continuous improvement strategies. The applicant proposes to hire two pertinent personnel throughout the grant period whose responsibilities will include assessing the baseline system/organizational structure and manage system wide improvement to ensure the success of grant implementation. However, the applicant does not provide sufficient evidence of how it plans to engage external stakeholders such as parents and business partners in the continuous improvement system which would further substantiate a rigorous continuous improvement process.

Data will be compiled through performance measures and reviewed by the school leadership team and the newly staffed Strategic Innovation Manager. Based on analysis by the school leadership team and the Strategic Innovation Manger, timely and regular feedback will be ascertained as to the progress of the reform goals. Ongoing corrections and improvements will be tracked by the newly staffed system/organizational professionals. This management of the continuous improvement process is appropriate and likely will increase the success of the proposed reform model.

The Superintendent of schools will present a report of the reform goals progress to the State Board of Education which is open for public viewing. The principals will report results vial the School Governance Council each semester. This strategy of public sharing of information on the quality of the investments funded by the Race to the Top-District program is appropriate and likely to reach all relevant stakeholders.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a thorough plan for communicating the status of the proposed reform initiatives to internal and external stakeholders. Notable are the school quality meetings and the community forums which will provide status updates to parents and community stakeholders.

The applicant provides limited evidence of internal and external stakeholder engagement. Although, the applicant asserts that feedback will be received through the Principal's School Governance Councils, the feedback will apparently be limited from only the participants on those councils. It is unclear how the applicant will solicit ongoing feedback regarding the implementation of the reform initiatives from a significant number of parents, teachers, students, and other stakeholders throughout the grant period. It is further unclear how the applicant will use feedback from stakeholders to inform change decisions throughout the implementation of the grant.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The rationale for selecting the District Performance Index (DPI) and the School Performance Index (SPI) is appropriate because it measures the status of student achievement and college and career readiness. The rationale for selecting the state standardized tests (CAPT) as performance measures for the implementation of the proposed reform model is appropriate because it measures student performance by subgroup. This will likely provide appropriate information to the schools for closing the achievement gap between subgroups. The combined measures (DPI, SPI, and CAPT) are likely to provide a balance of data to inform the continuous improvement process of the proposed reform model. In addition, these measures align nicely with the proposed reform goals of Middle Years Redesign and College Readiness.

Although the DPI and SPI measures reflect an aggregate of student performance, the CAPT measure provides results per subgroup of students. This justifies the rigorousness of the combined measures in providing informative feedback to students, educators, and other stakeholders. However, the selected performance measures (DPI, SPI, and CAPT) are calculated on an annual basis. Therefore, the timeliness of its analysis may not be as appropriate to bring about change in the reform initiatives.

The applicant's plan to calculate the differences in SPI values over time is likely to provide sufficient information to gauge the effectiveness of the measures to determine implementation progress.

The applicant presents twelve combined performance measures for the participating students.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant draws an alignment between the continuous improvement plan and evaluation plan in that the responsibilities of the newly staffed systems/organizational consultant in year one will include responsibilities to design systems for evaluation of each project in the proposed reform initiative. The applicant asserts that the newly staffed "Strategic Innovation Manager" will implement these systems in the subsequent years of the grant period. Sufficient evidence of the level of evaluations per

project is presented in the application.

However, it seems unreasonable to expect one Strategic Innovation Manager to effectively implement the evaluation systems developed for all participating middle and high schools.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	**10**	**5**

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies all funds that will support the project which include the Race to the Top-District grant and current LEA/State budget allocation. However, the applicant does not provide sufficient details as to the likelihood of the LEA/State budget allocation providing ongoing financial support for those items funded by the one time investment of the Race to the Top-District grant.

The applicant provides a reasonable budget for the technology project. Notable is the budget allocation for "communication/workshop with parents" as identified in the Project-Personalized Instructional Level Itemized Costs section of the proposed budget. By providing budget allocation for parent outreach, the applicant further justifies its intent to provide resources and technical assistance to this stakeholder group.

The applicant presents an unreasonable budget allocation for Interventionists as identified in the Project - Personalized Instruction Level Itemized Costs section of the proposed budget . The applicant proposes budget allocation for twelve interventionists ("1 per school for 12 schools"). However, the proposed reform initiative is to serve forty-one schools. It is unclear as to how the applicant proposes to manage the allocation of interventionists to schools if there are more than twelve schools that require support from interventionists. The use of interventionists in the schools is a critical component as indicated by the applicant to delivering personalized learning environments for all participating students.

The applicant proposes a budget allocation for a "Complementary Observer Leadership Coach" as identified in the Project-Personalized Instruction Itemized Costs section of the proposed budget. The applicant asserts that the "Complementary Observer Leadership Coach" is staffed "for increased observation of teachers as required by the state". The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence to justify this budget allocation as necessary for the implementation of the proposed reform initiative.

The applicant provides an unbalanced budget itemization for the "Student Development" project. As presented, the majority of the "Student Development" budget allocation is to provide for personnel. Minimum allocation of funds is directly related to building capacity through professional development of teachers, or to providing resources and technical assistance to students and parents under this project. This unbalanced budget allocation does not align with the rigorous vision of professional development for educators proposed in the application.

	Available	Score
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	**10**	**3**

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a plan for sustainability of the proposed reform initiative that relies on general state budget funding and external financial support. However, the applicant does not provide evidence of the state's intent to fund (even if it is to partially fund) specific sustainability efforts of the proposed reform initiative. By relying solely on the current state budget allocation, the proposed reform initiative is likely to fall short of necessary funding after the grant period.

The applicant does not provide evidence of the components of a high quality plan such as the timeliness and rationale for identifying funding for sustainability.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	**10**	**10**

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of a coherent and sustainable partnership with the "Partnership for Student Success" and the "Internship and Employer Engagement Work Group". Notable are the proposed family dinners/PTO meetings, parenting workshops, and civic engagement opportunities that are proposed through the partnership with the "Partnership for Student Success" organization.

The applicant plans to track the selected indicators that measure each result at the aggregate level for all children through an external evaluator and by grant staff tracking Capstone aligned internships. Educational liaisons will target resources from the community partnerships based on Capstone needs and Student Success Plans. The applicant also plans to scale up the partnership support over five years of implementation. Results will be improved overtime via quarterly reviews of partnership goals. This plan is appropriate and likely to provide sufficient augmented support to the participating schools and students.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of the integration of education and other services that will address the social-emotional, and behavioral needs of participating students. Notable are the health services (medical, dental, and vision) and mental health services (crisis interventions and specialized referrals) that will be provided through the district's partnership with "Internship and Employer Engagement Work Group".

The applicant provides a high quality plan (including timeliness and persons responsible) for how the partnership would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports. Notable is the Community School Director who will conduct needs assessments with parents, teachers, staff and students. Also notable is the inclusion of the partner agencies on the School Governance Team and Data Teams which will foster a better alignment of the partners' goals and the reform model goals. This collaboration will also foster a decision-making process and infrastructure between the district and the partner organizations.

Parents will be actively engaged in partnership activities such as workshops on college/career readiness, student internships, financial literacy, and college planning.

The applicant adequately identifies its annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level results.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a comprehensive plan to deliver personalized learning environments to all of its middle school and high school students. This is an ambitious yet attainable goal if the required stakeholder support is provided.

The applicant proposes to build on its work in the four core educational assurance areas by aligning its curriculum with the Common Cores State Standards (college and career readiness based standards), utilizing School Accountability Plans based on school data to inform teaching and learning, utilizing the Charlotte Danielson Effective Teaching Framework to develop teachers, and employing the "Portfolio approach with a Managed Performance Empowerment Theory of Action" system to turn around lowest-performing schools. The applicant's vision for increasing equity through personalized learning environments is promising in that the proposed strategies to address the four core educational assurance areas are proven research based.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of a robust accountability data system (a core educational assurance area) that measures student achievement and college and career readiness. The new data system calculates a District Performance Index (DPI) and an Overall School Index (OSI) which will prove beneficial for informing teachers and principals of improvement areas of instruction.

The applicant provides evidence of its intent to systemize the efforts of the proposed reform initiative primarily by hiring consultants to assist with systemization, evaluation, and planning for sustainability. Notable is the combined set of measures (OSI, SPI, CAPT) which will provide school level and student (subgroup) level data for analysis of the effectiveness of the reform initiative. However, these measures are only captured annually. This may inhibit quick reaction for improvement related change management. The effectiveness of educators is likely to be increased with the applicant's implementation of its plan to embed coaches/specialists at each of the participating schools to provide just-in-time professional development to teachers.

Total	210	158

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0360CT-3 for Hartford Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant describes how its vision for reform has been built on its half-decade of successful and sustained reform efforts related to personalized learning environments and college- and career-readiness, how it will continue to build these efforts, and how it will address each of the program's 4 core assurance areas. As evidence of its responsiveness to the 4 core assurance areas, it discusses its approaches to standards and assessments at (C)(1), to data analysis in its attachments on its School Quality Approach and on Scientific Research Based Interventions, to effective teachers and principals at (C)(2), and to turning around low-performing schools at its attachment on its School Quality Approach. These aspects are strengths because they address the 4 core assurance areas and are responsive to Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant's vision for reform (and its systemic approaches to accomplishing it) rests on 6 premises: (1) reducing the achievement gap by half; (2) increasing all middle and high school educators' knowledge and skills to support reform; (3) deploying more highly effective educators in schools and classrooms; (4) increasing student and family access to student data; (5) increasing numbers of students who demonstrate college/career-readiness; and (6) adjusting central office governance structure to reflect its Managed Performance Empowerment Theory of Action and student-centered instructional practices. These aspects are strengths because they address the 4 core assurance areas and are responsive to Absolute Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

- None noted.
- The applicant's overall vision for reform is comprehensive and coherent and is developmentally and pedagogically appropriate for middle and high school students and for students transitioning into college and careers, including students identified as high-need.

Applicant's vision for reform, goals, and proposed general approach and strategies all address the creation of personalized learning environments that accommodate the specific needs of students demonstrating all levels of performance, align resources with improving and ensuring college- and career-readiness and personalized learning, and facilitate incorporation of students' interests and input in determining what is taught and how it is taught. Overall, these considerations place the applicant at the higher end of the high range for this criterion.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant plans to serve 10,041 students (including 2,924 high-need students) and 839 educators at 41 sites in grades 6-12 in all academic subjects. These aspects are strengths because they substantiate the applicant's commitments: (1) to accomplishing comprehensive, coherent, systemic, and sustainable reform in a school district and schools that are already actively engaged in reform in grades K-5 by extending it into grades 6-12;

(2) to combat trends of slippage and decline in student academic performance results and of increasing risk factors in grades 6-12; and (3) to implement strategies of its guiding district-wide Strategic Operating Plan and related plans for reform.

- Applicant provides a list of all of its 41 participating schools and presents all required data characterizing them. This aspect is a strength because it is responsive to the selection criterion.
- Applicant indicates that it selected its 41 participating middle and high schools based on its need to curb trends of declines in academic achievement that start in middle school and continue into high school and its need to carry foward its extensive reforms at the elementary school level into its secondary schools. This aspect is a strength because it is responsive to the selection criterion.
- In its narrative and attachment, applicant describes how its approach to implementing its reforms by encompassing all 41 of its schools that serve grades 6-12 and all core subject areas has been adopted to support high-quality district- and school-level implementation of its project by applying its Strategic Implementation Approach Theory of Action, its School Quality Approach, and its Student Success Plan Framework, as well as advancing its Strategic Operating Plan.

Weaknesses:

- None noted.

Applicant provides all required data for its 41 participating schools and describes its rationale for selecting them. Overall, these considerations place the applicant at the higher end of the high range for this criterion.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant describes how its reforms that are already well under way in grades K-5 already convey early expectations that all students will attend college, how most of the activities it proposes to implement for curricula, assessment, and instructional practices are also already taking place in grades K-5, and how its strategies for reform in its middle schools will translate readily into grades K-5 since in the LEA those grades often share the same facilities as grades 6-8. These aspects are strengths because they advance project-specific goals and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its plans to create a pervasively student-centered model of instruction for all participating students and to conduct its activities at full-scale from the outset at 41 schools. These aspects are strengths because they advance project-specific goals and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant's detailed attachment on its LEA-wide high school Capstone-aligned internship program presents 10 recommendations for reforms, including several on scaling up the initiative from a number of pilot schools; and its Competitive Priority plans discuss a similar approach to scaling up this aspect of its plans for Absolute Priority 1. These aspects are strengths because they advance project-specific goals and address Absolute Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

- None noted.

Considered as a whole, applicant's plan for LEA-Wide Reform and Change is of high quality. In tables at (C)(1) and (C)(2), applicant presents all of the required attributes of a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, responsible parties) which also represents a plan specifically for LEA-Wide Reform and Change since it describes how the applicant will reach its outcome goals and since the district plans to serve all 41 schools having grades 6-12 from the start. Applicant also presents detailed attachments that describe how elements of its reform proposal will translate into meaningful reform to support LEA-wide change across all schools in the district; several of these attachments also present all of the required elements of a high-quality plan. Consequently, there is evidence that the applicant presents what is required for a high quality plan, only in a diffuse form. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant at the higher end of the high range for this criterion.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	4

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant's selected annual increments of improvement in its annual goals appear both ambitious and achievable in the areas for which it plans to measure performance. As evidence: it forecasts 3 points per year gains in the district performance index, or DPI, for the State summative assessments in grades 3-8 and in grade 10; its annual goals are ambitious, as evidenced by: (1) all

subgroups being expected to make the same 3-point gains on the DPI for grades 3-8 and on the DPI for grade 10, and (2) all subgroups being expected to make 2% gains in graduation rates per year. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria (A)(4)(a) by stating annual goals for performance on aummative assessments and (A)(4)(c) by stating annual goals for graduation rates.

Weaknesses:

- Applicant does not differentiate desired increments of change in annual goals for each subgroup or for each State summative assessment. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent incomplete responses to 2 of the 4 core assurance areas and to Absolute Priority 1, and do not reflect the applicant's LEA-wide target for inter-group achievement gap reduction where lower-performing groups must make greater yearly gains than higher-performing groups in order to close achievement gaps, as described in the narrative.
- Applicant does not differentiate desired increments of change in annual goals for each subgroup for improvement in graduation rates. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent incomplete responses to 2 of the 4 core assurance areas and to Absolute Priority 1, and do not reflect the applicant's LEA-wide target for inter-group achievement gap reduction where lower-performing groups must make greater yearly gains than higher-performing groups in order to close achievement gaps, as described in the narrative.
- For college enrollment rates, applicant presents only baselines and annual goals for all students (overall) but not for any subgroups. This aspect is a weakness because it impedes determining the ambitiousness and achievability of its annual goals and its plans for Absolute Priority 1, and it impedes ascertaining the ambitiousness and achievability of its forecasts for inter-group gap reductions.
- Applicant does not present sufficient data to align its district-level, grade-level, and subgroup-level annual goals with those the State has set for the district overall and for its various student subgroups. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criterion.

Applicant's annual goals are ambitious yet achievable, given that its forecasted subgroup- and assessment-specific annual change increments are 3 DPI points per year and those for improving high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates are both 2% gains per year. However, none of the annual goals for any of its performance measures forecasts the reduction or closing of inter-group achievement gaps by the end of the 4-year project. The degree to which the applicant's overall plan is of high quality was noted at (A)(3). Overall, the foregoing considerations specific to LEA-Wide Goals place the applicant toward the middle of the mid-range for this criterion.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	14

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant indicates that the LEA now leads the State in its rate of academic improvement. This aspect is a strength because it is responsive to selection criteria and addresses Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its strategies for turning around its lowest-performing schools based on its 7-component Portfolio approach combined with a Managed Performance Empowerment Theory of Action. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant indicates that the LEA has a 5-year record of advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching – as evidenced by adopting a Portfolio strategy based on school choice, school autonomy, pupil-based funding, and partnerships; overall 5-year gains of 22.3% in grade 3 reading, 20.9% in grade 4 mathematics, and 13.9% in grade 10 reading; overall 5-year gains of 25.2% in high school graduation rate and of 4.3% in postsecondary enrollment rate; 18 schools raising their Overall School Index (OSI) significantly by 4.0 or more points; and one of its lowest performing schools raising its OSI by 35.9 points. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant indicates that LEA has experienced significant success in implementing systemic initiatives to serve the individual needs of all students – as evidenced over the past 5 years by: 7 LEA magnet schools being nationally recognized as Magnet Schools of Merit; 4 LEA schools being nationally recognized as among America's Best Schools; and one school being recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- In attachments, applicant indicates that over the past 5 years the LEA has closed the state-district achievement gap by 15.5 OSI points, and has sustained 5-year achievement gains on the State summative assessment in

both mathematics and reading for each of grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.

- Applicant describes how it has replaced larger traditional high schools with smaller, more personalized, theme-based and magnet high schools to respond to student needs and interests, and has replaced its lowest-performing schools with higher-performing redesigned or newly created schools to provide college/career pathways. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- In narrative and attachments, applicant describes the 3 primary goals of its new strategic plan and the 6 strategies it uses to attain them – which are: relevant curriculum, quality instruction, school design fidelity, innovative leaders, capacity building, and family and community engagement. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes how it makes student performance data available to students, educators, and parents — via school presentations, parent-teacher conferences, parent-student planning meetings, standards-based school report cards, and the LEA website — and how it uses such data in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion.

Weaknesses:

- Applicant does not consistently indicate whether the schools where most evidence of an extensive track record of success was accomplished were persistently lowest-achieving schools or low-performing schools, or were among its 41 participating middle schools and high schools. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent an incomplete response to selection criteria.

Applicant substantiates its track record of success and general ability to improve students' academic performance results (both overall and within subgroups), to differentiate and reorganize its services and resources to reflect needs of students performing at varied levels, and to share performance data with parents (among others) and engage them as partners in its reform efforts. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant toward the higher end of the high range for this criterion.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant addresses in its narrative the requirement that the LEA make public, by school, its school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and to one of the 4 core assurance areas.
- In its narrative, the applicant indicates that the LEA makes public: (1) personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, based on the F-33 survey; (2) personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only; (3) personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and (4) non-personnel expenditures at the school level (if available). These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and to one of the 4 core assurance areas.

Weaknesses:

- Applicant does not provide sufficient evidence — in its narrative or by using attachments — of a high level of transparency in its processes, practices, and investments. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent an incomplete response to selection criteria.
- Applicant indicates that its financial records make public its actual investments for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration only at the district level not at the school level. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent an incomplete response to selection criteria.

Applicant's narrative provides some evidence of its commitment to demonstrating some transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, but not enough to constitute evidence of a high level of such transparency. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant at the higher end of the mid-range for this criterion.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant indicates that as one of the State's 30 alliance districts, the LEA has State-developed performance targets, and that it receives special funding contingent upon State approval of its plans to raise local student achievement and to close local achievement gaps. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion and support local plans for Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant indicates that the State has created conditions or delegated capacities to ensure and promote local flexibility and autonomy under its laws, statutes, and regulations by adopting state-, district-, and school-level performance indexes to measure the status of student achievement; enacting laws to expand digital learning for middle school and high school students and to exempt digitally-driven schools from certain regulations for class size and/or teacher-student ratios; and considering new legislation to let students enroll in both individual online courses and traditional schools. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion and support local plans for Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant cites specific State statutes and policies that provide school districts with the degree of financial flexibility, discretion, or autonomy they need to allocate and commit their financial resources in ways that will support its plans for reform. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion and support local plans for Absolute Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

- None noted.

The State's legal, statutory, and regulatory frameworks — as described in the narrative — appear compatible with and supportive of the applicant's plans to address Absolute Priority 1. Applicant furnishes abundant evidence that its flexibility, discretion, or autonomy extends to allocation and deployment of financial resources, as well as other aspects of governance and implementation of its reform strategies. Overall, these considerations place the applicant at the higher end of the high range for this criterion.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant describes how it has involved students, parents, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools in developing its proposal via focus groups specific to it and via working groups for developing its Strategic Operating Plan, which governs its overall plans for reform, including its present proposal. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and they set a precedent for similarly meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout project implementation.
- Applicant describes how it has incorporated input from diverse sources — parent focus groups, teacher focus groups, student focus groups, and community-business partner organization focus groups — in planning its proposal and in using their inputs in reframing varied aspects of its final proposal. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria.
- Applicant attaches a responsive letter and a brief proposal critique from the State's commissioner for education. These aspects are strengths because the letter and critique substantiate meaningful State-level stakeholder support as well as guidance and input for ways the applicant might adjust its responses to the selection criteria.
- Applicant includes 7 detailed letters of support from the city mayor, the city council, and 5 community-based and/or civic organizations. These aspects are strengths because the letters document broad-based and meaningful support among diverse external stakeholders for the applicant's plans for its project.

Weaknesses:

- In its narrative and attachments — as an LEA with collective bargaining representation — applicant provides insufficient evidence of direct engagement and support for its proposal from teachers in its 41 participating schools. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criteria.
- Applicant does not indicate — by numbers, ratios, or attached letters or forms — the levels of support it obtained from teachers and principals in each of its 41 participating schools. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criteria.
- Applicant does not attach or otherwise describe letters of support from its board of education or from its superintendent of schools. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent incomplete documentation of high-level administrative stakeholder support for the project.
- None of the 7 attached letters of support commits any future financial resources to the long-term sustainability of the project, and none specifies what roles the organizations providing the letters will have in implementing the project. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent incomplete documentation of substantive stakeholder support for the project.

Applicant presents abundant evidence that its internal and external stakeholders were directly engaged in developing and/or critiquing the present proposal; however, significantly, it provides insufficient documentation of the existence and level of support of its teachers and principals in its 41 participating schools. Overall, these considerations place the applicant toward the middle of the mid-range for this criterion.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	**5**	**4**

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant describes how its schools analyze and review student data — summative assessments, formative classroom assessments, socio-emotional and behavioral data, subgroup-specific data — and how they engage parents and educators in developing school accountability plans for all schools and in implementing school quality processes for lower-performing schools. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and assist in determining the nature and extent of needs and gaps.
- Applicant describes a 3-tier process for its analysis of needs and gaps at the student/family level, the school level, and the district level, and identifies the assessments and other data sources it uses in its process. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and assist in determining the nature and extent of needs and gaps.
- In its narrative and detailed attachments, applicant presents the elements required of a high-quality plan for analysis of its current status — including analysis of academic achievement, achievement gaps, socio-emotional and behavioral data, and graduation rates; it states a goal, identifies responsible parties, specifies core activities, presents a timeline, and identifies deliverables for the analysis of needs and gaps. Viewed as a whole, the plan is credible and feasible. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria.

Weaknesses:

- Other than basing its overall project in its guiding Strategic Operating Plan, the applicant does not present a specific plan for the analysis of the logic behind its reform proposal. This is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criterion.

Applicant's specific plan for the Analysis of Needs and Gaps is of high quality. Its narrative and detailed attachments present all of the elements required of a high quality plan related specifically to gauging its current status and the Analysis of Needs and Gaps. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant at the lower end of the high range for this criterion.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	**20**	**19**

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant discusses how it is data-driven LEA, has data teams in every school, creates school accountability plans based on school data, analyzes and reports data to guide site decision-making, and is accountable to the parents and the community based on achievement data related to LEA targets. These aspects are strengths because each is responsive to selection criteria and each addresses Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant discusses its LEA-wide systemic and strategic commitments to reform and its plans for supporting and sustaining reforms that support personalized learning in its 41 participating schools via — extensive professional development for educators; support of professional learning communities; enhanced after-school programs; robust school-community-business partnerships and collaborations; diffusion of research-based best practices coupled with support of site-selected reform models and strategies; delivery and use of structured systems of standards-based curriculum and assessment; innovative 1:1-ratio student uses of personal electronic devices in grades 9-12; student participation in local college/career internships, community leadership activities, and college/career awareness activities; and support of a comprehensive multi-component student success program. These aspects are strengths because each is responsive to selection criteria and each addresses Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its plans to use the 10 core activities of a student advisory program and personalized student success plans to ensure that students understand that their learning is key to their success in reaching their goals, and to support students' planning and goal setting related to college/career-readiness. These aspects are strengths because each is responsive to selection criteria and each addresses Absolute Priority 1.

Applicant describes its plans to use the portfolios incorporated in student success plans to engage parents in understanding and analysis of student performance data and in active participation in educational decision-making. These aspects are strengths because each is responsive to selection criteria and each addresses Absolute Priority 1.

- Applicant describes its plans to use technology (e.g., personal electronic devices) to create and support Anywhere/Anytime learning environments that foster self-directed learning and deepen students' levels of involvement in learning experiences in areas of academic interest, and to improve educational equity by providing such technology to all students in grades 9-12. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes how it will use technology (e.g., personal electronic devices) and community-based learning experiences (e.g., internships) to provide students with exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its uses of computer-based adaptive assessments for guiding, structuring, and individualizing instruction, and describes its processes for using project-based learning, integrating personal electronic devices, and other strategies for deepening and personalizing student engagement with content, improving students' demonstrated mastery of grade-specific content, and for promoting students' goal setting, problem solving, and creative/critical thinking skills. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its strategies for delivering personalized sequences of instructional content and skill development such as the development and rollout of Response to Intervention (RTI)/Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI) systems, use of intervention toolkits, and deployment of intervention specialists and behavior technicians to support all 41 participating schools. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant discusses its plans for the coordinated and systematic use of 9 specific strategies for providing high-quality instructional approaches and personalized learning environments and for ensuring equity and access to them across the LEA. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

- In its narrative and its attached curriculum and instruction improvement plan, applicant inadequately describes its plans and provisions for ensuring that all participating students have equitable access to high-quality content — including high-quality digital learning content — aligned with college/career-ready graduation requirements.

Considered as a whole, applicant's plan for Learning is of high quality. Its table for (C)(1) translates its guiding vision for reform into well-defined and specific goals for Learning. It presents key activities, specifies (e.g., by position title) its responsible parties, states definite timelines, and identifies well-aligned outcomes/deliverables for each of its goals related to Learning. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant toward the higher end of the high range for this criterion.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant describes its plans to use school-based coaches and specialists as well as central office-based supports to differentiate, align, deliver, and embed comprehensive professional development to address its educators' identified needs and reflect its strategies for Learning. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its core strategies for implementing school-level collaborative learning among educators to support personalized learning environments and college/career-readiness – such as redefining the roles of its STEM/Literacy coaches, developing teacher leaders in each school to provide peer coaching in professional learning communities, restructuring central office assets to support the school-level coaches, and deploying STEM/Literacy intervention specialists for State-identified schools in need of improvement. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its plans to enable its educators to adapt content and instruction to individual students' academic needs, interests, and learning styles through use of project-based learning, support from STEM/Literacy coaches, development of project-based curricular units, ongoing alignment of all district curricula with Common Core State Standards, and systemic diffusion into schools and classrooms of successful models and structures for integrating new technology assets in blended learning environments. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its plans for using interactive, computer-based, standards-aligned, formative assessments to support personalized instruction and standards-based report cards to tracking students' progress towards the college/career-ready standards. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its plans to use a research-validated rubric for teacher evaluation and teacher development to evaluate its teachers' performance, to train all principals in using the rubric, to certify all principals before they use the rubric, and to provide digital resources – using its computer-based Teachscape platform – for professional learning to assist teachers in working on specific areas identified for improvement. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and

- address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant discusses how its present and planned instruments for measuring its educators' effectiveness will furnish actionable information that helps them to identify and implement optimal learning approaches geared to individual student academic needs and interests. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources and approaches, such as computer-based universal screening to identify student needs, use of formative assessments in computer-based learning programs, deployment of a wider array of learning platforms with built-in diagnostics, and school-level support of STEM/Literacy coaches in to create high-functioning data teams. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant identifies and describes 8 specific informational resources — either already available or planned — to guide and facilitate its school leaders and school leadership teams in their actions taken to assess and to improve school culture, school climate, and educators' effectiveness at the individual and school levels, and to advance continuous school improvement. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

- Applicant does not delineate its approach to evaluating effectiveness of the superintendent and does not discuss how it will develop and implement such an evaluation. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criteria.
- Although applicant presents a high quality plan for increasing its ranks of effective and highly effective teachers and principals, it presents no plans discussing the extent to which these educators will teach and lead in its hard-to-staff schools or hard-to-staff subjects or hard-to-staff specialty areas. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criteria.

Considered as a whole, applicant's plan for Teaching and Leading is of high quality. Its table for (C)(2) translates its guiding vision for reform into well-defined and specific goals for Teaching and Leading. It presents key activities, specifies (e.g., by position title or central office unit) its responsible parties, states definite timelines, and identifies well-aligned outcomes/deliverables for each of its goals related to Teaching and Leading. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant at the middle of the high range for this criterion.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant indicates that the district has committed to allocating at least 70% of its budget directly to the schools and presently allocates only 10% of its budget to central office functions; in its narrative and attachments, it also describes its student-based budgeting model that ensures that most district funding follows students to their school of choice. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and supportive of Absolute Priority 1.
- In its narrative and attachments, applicant describes how its implementation of the Managed Performance Theory of Action provides greater autonomy to high-performing and consistently improving schools and adjusts proportionately the autonomy of low-performing schools. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and supportive of Absolute Priority 1.
- In its narrative and attachments, applicant describes the roles of its school leadership teams and how its central office provides them with flexibility and autonomy over school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for school-based educators and non-educators, and the school-level budget. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and supportive of Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant thoroughly describes the roles of central office units in supporting district- and school-level data analysis, monitoring and analysis of performance data sorted by sites and subgroups, determining overall annual school indexes of performance, and reviewing and analyzing teacher evaluation data – among many other supportive central office functions. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and supportive of Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant discusses the continuous and ongoing revision of its strategic plans, adoption of new strategic goals aligned with its vision, and its continuous alignment of its policies, rules, and resources (human, physical, technological, and financial) to support its vision and strategic goals, each of which supports Absolute Priority 1. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and supportive of Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant indicates that it has convened 4 ad hoc work teams to study existing LEA policies — on grading, graduation, on-line credit, and homework — in order to improve alignment of its policies on high school credits and graduation requirements with its

implementation of personalized learning environments. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criteria and supportive of Absolute Priority 1.

- Primarily at (C)(1), applicant describes its strategies for personalizing learning and supporting participating students who demonstrate varied levels of content mastery and who exhibit varied needs for social, emotional, and behavioral supports, interventions, and enhancements. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and supportive of Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant indicates that every high school in the LEA lets students earn college credits via AP courses, dual enrollment courses, and/or articulation agreements that let students take courses at college campuses. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and supportive of Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its adoption and implementation — as sanctioned under the district's operating plan — of innovative models, policies, action plans, practices, and their corresponding curricular and assessment resources tailored specifically for delivering more targeted and personalized instruction to student subgroups, including those who are limited English proficient and those with disabilities. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Primarily at (C)(1) and (C)(2), applicant describes how the LEA central office presently supports the participating schools — in coordinating and facilitating the functions of instruction, curricula, assessment, and professional development — so that students can progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery and can demonstrate the mastery of State standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant identifies specific policies and rules in its Board Policy Manual that facilitate personalized learning in the areas of flexibility and support, frameworks for curricula and instruction, stakeholder engagement and involvement, and resource structures (including funding allocations). These aspects strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

- None noted.

Considering the narrative and attachments as a whole, applicant's plan for LEA Policies, Practices, and Rules is of high quality. Applicant thoroughly identifies many supportive practices, policies, and rules. It describes a credible approach to LEA Policies, Practices, and Rules in a way that incorporates the elements of a high-quality plan. The narrative and attachments present many current and anticipated activities, identify deliverables and responsible parties (e.g., by position title or central office unit), present an overarching goal, and state a timeline specific to LEA Policies, Practices, and Rules. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant at the higher end of the high range for this criterion.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant describes how it uses PowerSchool as its platform enabling parents to access and track their student's homework assignments, grades, behavior, and evaluations, how it uses its online School Leadership Network to support professional learning communities, and how it enlists a community-based educational reform advocacy partner to assist parents in using its online portal for school choice. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant indicates that every school has high-speed wireless Internet access, every teacher has a computer, and students have access to computers that varies with the specific school's theme and its approach to learning. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its resources – such as a district-level information technology department, a regional help-desk, school-based technology coaches – for delivering appropriate levels of technical support to students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant identifies and describes 9 existing and planned district- and/or community-based providers of technical support for students, parents, and families in using technology to support parent/community engagement, to improve equity of access to technology, to enable families to access student performance data, to support global networking among student peers, and to allow educators to analyze student achievement data. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- In its narrative at (C)(2)(a) and (C)(2)(b) and in its attachments on School-Based Budgeting, applicant describes the specific steps it has already taken and plans to take for ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other relevant stakeholders will have access to necessary content, tools, and other relevant resources both during school hours and non-school hours, and it discusses how these will be available to participants regardless of income – particularly its efforts to improve equity through its use of differentiated per pupil spending formulas across all programs, grade-levels, sites, and subgroups. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

- Applicant does not adequately describe the extent of its ensuring adoption of open data formats, or how and when it will accomplish the project-wide exportability of data in such formats, or the extent of ensuring the usability of data in other technology-based learning systems. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent an incomplete response to selection criteria.
- Applicant does not adequately discuss the extent of interoperability of the State's or its local data systems in terms of their inclusion of human resources data or budget data. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criteria.

Considered as a whole, applicant's plan for LEA and School Infrastructure is of moderate quality. Applicant discusses many current and planned activities that provide organizational and technical support to its schools, students, and families, and it identifies the parties responsible for them. By distinguishing consistently between current conditions and initiatives under development, it presents a rudimentary timeline. However, applicant does not state a goal specific to a plan for LEA and School Infrastructure, it does not discuss its related deliverables as such (e.g., when it will deploy new technologies), and it does not adequately describe technical support for the data systems, online assessments, online courses, or other technology-based resources it plans to use. Overall, these considerations place the applicant at the higher end of the mid-range for this criterion.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	**15**	**11**

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant indicates that it has implemented a continuous-improvement-driven redesign of several schools that it had restructured, but which were still performing at low levels (e.g., by district interventions, school closings, or adoptions of higher-performing school models). This aspect is a strength because it represents evidence of the applicant's commitment to continuous improvement in implementing comprehensive school reform in ways consistent with its plan for Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes an organizational systems-oriented strategy (e.g., its School Quality Approach) for assessing its present status of systemic alignment and developing a plan for optimal alignment, conducting continual monitoring and assessment, and communicating the progress of its efforts over time. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant describes its plans for a Systems/Organizational Development Consultant in Year 1 to initiate its continuous improvement activities, and then a Strategic Innovation Manager in Years 2-4 to lead them in close coordination with the 41 schools' school leadership teams. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria and address Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant discusses how the Strategic Innovation Manager will report and recommend steps for improvement twice yearly to the Superintendent's Cabinet, and how each principal will report the school governance council the results and recommendations specific to their site. These aspects are strengths because they represent elements of a plan for accountability for continuous improvement to both internal stakeholders (cabinet) and external stakeholders (councils) and support the applicant's plan for Absolute Priority 1.
- In its narrative and attachments, applicant describes how it will share information with the public (e.g., using printed media, websites, formal reports, and school and district forums) to ensure that students, teachers, parents (and other internal and external stakeholders) are informed about the project's status, its continuous improvement processes, and its midcourse corrections. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria.

Weaknesses:

- Applicant does not adequately describe how the Strategic Innovation Manager will review and analyze student performance data and educator performance data in determining the need for midcourse corrections and in deciding what corrections or other adjustments to recommend. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent an incomplete response to selection criteria.
- Applicant does not adequately describe its means for ensuring rigor in its continuous improvement processes or in recommending, selecting, and adopting subsequent corrections and adjustments during its project. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent an incomplete response to selection criteria.
- Applicant does not identify what mechanisms it will use to ensure rigorousness in its continuous improvement processes after completing implementation of its 4-year project. This aspect is a weakness because it impedes determining the degree of rigorousness of the applicant's continuous improvement process and ascertaining its potential usefulness in making post-grant corrections and improvements.

Applicant's plan for formative continuous improvement closely reflects the urban applicant's frameworks for enabling organizational development and systemic change. It focuses on engaging internal stakeholders as partners in a process of continuous improvement more than it does external ones. It does not describe its means for ensuring the rigor of its processes or the appropriateness of its recommended and adopted midcourse corrections for either during or after the 4-year project period. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant toward the higher end of the mid-range for this criterion.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant describes how its school governance councils engage families and community members in informing policy and program development and making site-level decisions including selection of school principals, and how they facilitate parents' and families' access to school-level, classroom-level, and student-level performance indicators and related data. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to that part of the selection criterion that concerns engagement of external stakeholders and communication with them.
- Applicant lists 11 distinct strategies for ensuring ongoing communication and engagement with all of its internal and external stakeholders – a district website, a district intranet, principal newsletters, principal reports to school governance councils, superintendent's Board reports, superintendent's cabinet and school leadership team meetings, a principals leadership network, school quality meetings, community forums and promotional events, and a district communication plan. These aspects are strengths because they are comprehensive and inclusive and are responsive to the selection criterion.

Weaknesses:

- Applicant does not describe any mechanisms to be used for reaching hard-to-reach parents and/or families and hard-to-reach linguistic-cultural communities. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criterion.

Applicant identifies many strategies for communicating with and engaging its internal and external stakeholders in ways conducive to addressing the 4 core assurance areas and Absolute Priority 1. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant at the lower end of the high range for this criterion.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant indicates that its LEA-wide target for reducing achievement gaps is, by 2018, to reduce by half the gap in achievement for its schools and subgroups, and that this target requires the greatest gains for the students and subgroups that are the farthest behind in order to achieve its target. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion.
- Applicant indicates that its LEA-wide target for improving graduation rates is to increase its cohort graduation rate by annual increments so that the gap between its present (baseline) cohort graduation rate and a graduation rate of 94% is reduced by half by 2018. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion.
- Applicant indicates that its primary aim is for all students and subgroups to achieve, in the aggregate, at the Goal level on the State standardized tests and that meeting this aim in grade 8 correlates highly with students' performance in grade 10. This expectation is ambitious yet reasonable given that 41% of its elementary and middle schools have already met it in reading and 36% of the same schools have already met it in mathematics; these aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion.
- Applicant describes how its use of accountability performance targets and aspirational performance targets for all of its schools and subgroups will yield rigorous, timely, and formative leading information that will allow it to adjust and redirect its interventions as needed to advance its plan and theory of action. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion.
- Applicant discusses how it will calculate annually its school performance index (SPI) to provide a status measure of performance for schools and subgroups, and use the SPI to compare changes in performance over time by calculating the difference in SPI values year-to-year or over several years. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion.
- Applicant indicates that it uses a framework for teaching rubric and a web-based observation system to evaluate teacher effectiveness with 2 weighted indicators related to teacher practice and 2 weighted indicators related to student outcomes, and that the State's newly adopted formulas for defining teacher and principal effectiveness are slated to take effect in 2013-14. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion.
- For evaluating principal effectiveness, applicant indicates that, by 2013-14, it will adopt 4 weighted indicators that take into account stakeholder feedback, leadership practice, student learning, and teacher effectiveness. These aspects are strengths because they

- are responsive to the selection criterion.
- Applicant identifies 12 performance measures. This aspect is a strength because it is responsive to a program requirement and to the selection criterion.
- Applicant describes its rationale for selecting its applicant-proposed performance measures. This aspect is a strength because it is responsive to the selection criterion.

Weaknesses:

- Although applicant describes its detailed rationale for doing so, it presents blank tables for its baselines and annual goals for the numbers and ratios of participating students with effective or highly effective teachers and principals. These aspects are weaknesses because they impede determining the ambitiousness and achievability of the applicant's annual goals, do not address one of the 4 core assurance areas, and represent an incomplete response to selection criteria.
- Applicant's performance measure for SPI among schools found to be effective and highly effective presents the same gains (3 points per year) for all subgroups in its annual targets. This aspect is a weakness because it does not result in reducing or closing of inter-group achievement gaps in ways consistent with its plan for Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant's two performance measures for students (grades 4-8, grades 9-12) who are on track to college/career-readiness present the same gains (5% per year) for all subgroups in their annual targets. These aspects are weaknesses because they do not result in reducing or closing of inter-group gaps in ways consistent with its plan for Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant's two performance measures for students (grades 4-8, grades 9-12) at or above proficient on the state summative assessment in math or reading present the same gains (2% per year) for all subgroups in their annual targets. These aspects are weaknesses because they do not result in reducing or closing of inter-group achievement gaps in ways consistent with its plan for Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant's two performance measures for attendance (grades 4-8, grades 9-12) present the same gains (2% per year) for all subgroups in their annual targets. These aspects are weaknesses because they do not result in reducing or closing of inter-group gaps in ways consistent with its plan for Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant's two performance measures for discipline (grades 4-8, grades 9-12) present the same improvements (-1% per year) for all subgroups in their annual targets. These aspects are weaknesses because they do not result in reducing or closing of inter-group gaps in ways consistent with its plan for Absolute Priority 1.

Applicant presents sufficient information to determine the extent to which the annual performance targets of its performance measures are ambitious yet achievable; they appear to be both. However, applicant does not present baselines and annual targets for highly effective teachers and principals or for effective teachers and principals, and the uniformity across subgroups of its forecasts for gains is not supportive of inter-group gap reduction. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant at the lower end of the mid-range for this criterion.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant identifies 61 specific evaluation questions it expects to address throughout its 4-year project period in evaluating the effectiveness of its investments in 11 core strategies of its plans for Absolute Priority 1. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria.
- Applicant's 61 specific evaluation questions address the effectiveness of investments in its use of technology, working with community partners, and decision-making structures, as well as investments in other dimensions of its project. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria.
- Applicant identifies a Systems/Organizational Development Consultant (Year 1) and a Strategic Innovation Manager (Years 2-4) as the parties to be responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of investments. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria.

Weaknesses:

- None noted.

Applicant presents a plan for Evaluating Effectiveness of high quality. The plan specifies core evaluation activities (61 questions), identifies responsible parties (project staff, external evaluator), discusses deliverables (e.g., when the State will deliver educator evaluation measures), alludes to a timeline (in its overall project evaluation plan), and states a goal (measuring systemic status) specifically for its plan for Evaluating Effectiveness. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant at the higher end of the high range for this criterion.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant's budget appears sufficient to support its proposal. Among reasons for this determination are: requested funding for its 3 project-level budgets in sequence is: $16,815,501, $7,142,769, and $6,041,730. Of the $30,000,000 total grant requested, $1,484,400 (or 4.94% in total) is designated for sub-contracts. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion.
- Applicant provides thoroughly detailed rationales for investing in each of its 3 project-level budgets. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to the selection criterion and facilitate determining whether the costs are necessary, reasonable, and allowable.
- Applicant's salary and wage schedules and fringe benefit rates are described as reflecting local policy. These aspects are strengths because they contribute to determining the reasonableness and sufficiency of the proposed budget.
- Applicant states its specific fringe benefits rates for both certified and non-certified and both full-time and part-time personnel (although not the components used in calculating them). These aspects are strengths because they contribute to determining the reasonableness and sufficiency of the proposed budget.

Weaknesses:

- In its Project Level Itemized Costs tables, applicant does not differentiate clearly and consistently between its one-time investments and its ongoing operational costs. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criteria.
- Applicant provides no attachments of letters or proposed budgets to document or detail the cost assumptions of its proposed sub-contracts. This aspect is a weakness because it impedes determining the reasonableness and sufficiency of the proposed budget.
- Applicant does not identify other sources of funds that will support its project; it does not cite some sources of funding (e.g., IDEA Part B, NCLBA Titles IIA and IIB, and others), which can readily be coordinated with, and used to leverage, its requested ARRA grant funds. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criterion.

Overall, these considerations place the applicant toward the higher end of the mid-range for this criterion.

	Available	Score
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strength

- Applicant indicates that one role of the project's Strategic Innovations Manager during project implementation will be the ongoing development of a plan for sustainability in collaboration with the district's Office of Institutional Advancement. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria.
- In its narrative and attachments, applicant provides evidence of the applicant's intention to pursue its reforms regardless of the outcome of its application, and evidence that the Board, the Superintendent, and community are committed to pursuing reforms as adopted in the district's Strategic Operating Plan. These aspects are strengths because they represent evidence of sustainability and are responsive to selection criteria.
- In its narrative and attachments, applicant provides evidence of having adopted and implemented many of the same reform strategies and practices that it proposes to adopt and implement across its 41 participating schools. These aspects are strengths because they represent evidence of sustainability and are responsive to selection criteria.

Weaknesses:

- Applicant does not indicate any funds from other sources used to support the project in any of its 3 project-level budgets. These aspects are weaknesses because they impede determining the reasonableness and sufficiency of resources for, and district commitment to, sustaining the project in the post-grant period.
- Applicant's 3 project-level budgets propose 50-plus new positions (not counting several sub-contracted consultants). This aspect is a weakness because applicant does not provide any evidence — in letters or other attachments — of its access to sufficient resources to sustain these 50-plus new positions after its 4-year project ends.
- Although applicant indicates that its general budget state and federal funds as well as corporate and foundation support will sustain its proposed programs and infrastructure after the 4-year project ends, it does not provide any evidence — in letters of support, Board resolutions, or other attachments — of its commitment of such resources for sustaining its project post-grant. These aspects

are weaknesses because they impede determining the reasonableness and sufficiency of resources for, and district commitment to, sustaining the project in the post-grant period.

- Applicant does not describe the roles of State and local government leaders in providing financial support or other resources during the post-grant period; none of its attached letters of support commits such leaders to any future financial support. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to the selection criterion.
- Applicant does not identify which specific practices, policies, or processes it expects to continue after the 4-year project period or how it plans to select which ones to sustain financially post-grant. These aspects are weaknesses because they impede determining the reasonableness and sufficiency of resources for, and district commitment to, sustaining the project in the post-grant period.

Considered as a whole, applicant's plan for Sustainability is of moderate quality. Applicant's discussion of Sustainability discusses activities and identifies responsible parties, but does not present a goal, a timeline, or deliverables specific to Sustainability — and thus lacks some of the required elements of a high-quality plan. In addition, applicant provides very few specifics about its potential sources of post-grant funding and it provides no evidence of any explicit commitments to such funding from any public or private source. Applicant further does not provide adequate evidence of any plans to commit existing and foreseeable funding resources (e.g., NCLBA Titles IA, IIA, and IIB) ordinarily available to Title I-eligible school districts to sustaining its strategies post-grant. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant at the middle of the mid-range for this criterion.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant describes its plans to expand the quality, quantity, and coordination of services and supports for youth and families though an existing partnership for community schools and student success and an existing collaborative work group for college/career-readiness comprised of leaders in the corporate, nonprofit, community, philanthropic, and educational sectors. These aspects are strengths because they support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1 as required at Criterion (1).
- Applicant describes 10 population-level desired outcomes related to its plans for the Competitive Priority — 6 of them focus on educational outcomes (school attendance, and 4 focus on family and community outcomes. These aspects are strengths because they address the selection criteria and support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1.
- Applicant indicates that project staff — and an unspecified external evaluator — will analyze baseline and performance data to track its 10 indicators for participating students in its Competitive Priority activities. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to selection criteria.
- Applicant describes a 6-component plan for delivering holistic and integrated community- services at its participating schools in the areas of health, mental health, youth development, lifelong learning, parent enrichment and engagement, and community engagement. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to Competitive Priority selection criteria.
- Applicant indicates that its Competitive Priority activities will assess students' needs and assets; identify and inventory school and community needs and assets; and create the means to select, implement, and evaluate appropriate supports for participating students. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to Competitive Priority selection criteria.
- Applicant describes how it will use school governance councils and other communication and engagement vehicles to engage parents, families, and other stakeholders in its partnership activities. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to Competitive Priority selection criteria.
- Applicant identifies desired results for each of its 10 indicators; furthermore, its annual goals for 7 of its 13 performance measures are ambitious and achievable – as evidence, 7 measures forecast either all or 100% of participants demonstrating each of 7 desired outcomes. In addition, applicant's annual goals for its remaining performance measure are ambitious and achievable – as evidence, the indicators forecast as annual goals a 90% attendance rate and 50% placement of participants in internships. These aspects are strengths because they are responsive to Competitive Priority selection criteria and support the applicant's plans Absolute Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

- In its Competitive Priority activities, applicant does not adequately describe how it plans to focus its resources on high-need students (e.g., disabilities, poverty, limited English proficiency). These aspects are weaknesses because they represent an incomplete response to Competitive Priority selection criteria.
- In its Competitive Priority activities, applicant does not adequately describe how it plans to scale up its model beyond its participating students to at least other high-need students in the LEA over time. These aspects are weaknesses because they

represent an incomplete response to Competitive Priority selection criteria.

- In its Competitive Priority activities, applicant does not adequately describe how its partnership plans to improve results over time. These aspects are weaknesses because they represent an incomplete response to Competitive Priority selection criteria.
- Applicant does not describe how it plans to match the results of its 10 indicators for participants in its Competitive Priority activities against an aggregate of all middle school and high school students in the LEA. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to Competitive Priority selection criteria.
- Applicant does not clearly and explicitly align its 13 performance measures with its 10 indicators for its Competitive Priority activities. This aspect is a weakness because it represents an incomplete response to Competitive Priority selection criteria.

The applicant's Competitive Priority activities support its plans described in Absolute Priority 1, although the evidence in attached letters substantiating the commitments identified partners in a Competitive Priority partnership supporting the applicant's plans for Absolute Priority 1 is partial but not complete; some identified organizations furnished letters of support, others did not do so.

Applicant provides no evidence in attachments to document the commitments of the organizations to which it alludes in its narrative. It does not substantiate any commitments on their parts to conduct any of the activities it describes for its 4-year project period, nor does it document any commitments on their parts to sustain them in any way financially post-grant.

Considered as a whole the applicant's plan for its Competitive Priority is of moderate quality. It specifies 10 program indicators, states a goal specific to its plan for the Competitive Priority, identifies responsible parties for its services, describes core activities, and identifies deliverables (e.g., placements in internships); however, applicant does not furnish a timeline for its core Competitive Priority. Overall, the foregoing considerations place the applicant toward the higher end of the mid-range for this criterion.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

- Applicant's overall plan is comprehensive in terms of its scope – as evidenced by its proposing 3 project-level budgets, as well as by its targeting all core subjects in the 41 middle schools and high schools in the LEA.
- Applicant's overall plan is also comprehensive in that it proposes strategies that address all of the 4 core assurance areas (standards and assessments, data systems, effective teachers and principals, turning around lowest-achieving schools) – as evidenced by its table at (C)(1) for standards and assessments, its narrative at (A)(1) and elsewhere for data systems, its table at (C)(2) for effective teachers and principals, and its its narrative at (A)(1) and elsewhere for turning around lowest-achieving schools.
- Considered as a whole, applicant's plan is for Absolute Priority 1 is coherent and responsive to its selection criteria – as evidenced by the focus of its goals and strategies as well as its requested funding on: creating personalized learning environments; personalizing strategies for both teaching and learning; significantly improving learning outcomes overall and for identified subgroups; aligning instruction, curricula, assessment, and professional development with college- and career-ready standards; promoting accelerated learning and achievement for all students; providing extensive supports and interventions for high-need students who are not demonstrating mastery of content and skills; increasing the effectiveness of educators through extensive and intensive professional development as well as data-driven assessment, monitoring, and evaluation of its school-, classroom-, and student-level impacts; increasing graduation rates as well as college enrollments; and improving students' college- and career-readiness.

Weaknesses:

- The coherence of the applicant's plan is incomplete in at least 2 respects: (1) the applicant does not adequately identify the sources of financial resources it expects to use to sustain its key strategies after the 4-year project period ends, and (2) the applicant does not provide adequate evidence to document that teachers from each participating middle school support its proposal.
- Beyond these limitations, the applicant's component-specific plans generally are of high quality.

Overall, in light of the foregoing considerations, the applicant has met Absolute Priority 1.

	Available	Score
Total	210	169